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## THE NEW IRELAND.—III.

BY SYDNEY BROOKS.

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THE stage on which the tragi-comedy of Irish life is enacted is an island somewhat smaller than the State of Indiana, somewhat larger than that of South Carolina. It is a country of soft, melancholy, almost depressing beauty, piteously eloquent of its hapless history, weaving a spell of plaintive enchantment in a mist of tears. I know of no land where the consciousness of humanity so colors the aspects of nature, where the thought of the past and all its mournfulness, of the strivings, failures, crimes of the dead and the living, so insistently obtrudes on the contemplation of mountain, lake and moor. On the luscious spreading pasture-lands of Meath and Kildare, where the bullock has made a solitude and called it prosperity; among the vast panoramas of heathery, stony, desolate hills in Kerry, with their gaunt, unconquered look; on the great treeless limestone plain that holds the centre of Ireland; in the heart of such miniature Paradises as Glengariff and Killarney, where all is rich with an exotic luxuriance; amid the islands off the southwest coast, where the Gulf Stream flows and tree-ferns, palms, bamboo and eucalyptus grow in the open air; gazing on some rolling, storm-swept expanse of peat-bog; among the jagged, flint-strewn headlands of Connemara and Donegal, that throw their shadow over the prismatic buffetings of the Atlantic; fishing on one or other of the countless lakes; at the sight of a ruined and abandoned farmhouse where, perhaps, some victim of the famine lay down to die—always and everywhere one feels the brooding presence of the lives that have been lived, of the history made and of the problems they have remorselessly bequeathed. The appeal of Ireland's beauty has in it, to my mind, a recurring undertone of wildness and tragedy.

To the trim and cultivated aspects of England, where all angles and corners have been smoothed away, the contrast she offers is complete. Her gray-green monotone has little or none of the variegated colorings that make the plump and smiling sister-isle a patch-work quilt. Her very stillnesses are different from those of England; they seem to tell, not of deep and rich placidity, of some happy cæsural pause, but of listlessness, despair, defeat. And the climate deepens the sense of forlornness. It is mild, humid, relaxing. Exposed to the full force of the southerly and westerly winds that blow from the Atlantic for nine months in every year, denuded of trees and almost wholly without any system of national drainage, Ireland is the predestined home of caressing rains, leaden and capricious skies, the sudden squall, and the soft, enfolding mist. Of the extremes of heat and cold she knows nothing; frosts and droughts are equally foreign to her normal experience; the characteristic of her climate is an equable, enervating humidity. It is a climate that impresses the casual traveller as inviting to inertia, as congenial to a spirit of lethargic fatalism, and as encouraging, and indeed excusing, the use of artificial stimulants. Its economic as well as its mental and moral influence on the people is very great. It has given Ireland a soil of extraordinary fertility, the best grazing-lands in the world, and an atmosphere peculiarly adapted for the bleaching of linens. Parts of Kerry, it is believed, are suitable for tea-planting; tobacco is grown in Navan. On the other hand, the excessive moisture is unfavorable to wheat and only a little less so to barley. The principal Irish crop is oats.

On this beautiful, romantic, depressing, rain-soaked, lake-riddled island lives a population of slightly over four million people. Sixty-five years ago they numbered eight millions; in sixty-five years, while the population of England and of Scotland has doubled, that of Ireland has been halved. And the appalling drain of emigration still continues; every year sees from thirty to forty thousand men and women fleeing from the country. Moreover, as one would surmise, it is the young, the vigorous, the fit who go; the unfit who remain. Something over ninety per cent. of the emigrants are over ten and under forty-five years of age, and not ten per cent. of them transplant themselves under the British flag. But emigration on this un-

paralleled scale is more than a direct loss. The account is not closed when you reckon merely the numbers of those who go, or the economic efficiency withdrawn with them, or even the international consequences of their settlement in a competitive country. You have also to consider the indirect toll they levy on the mental and physical vitality of those who stay; and what that toll amounts to the lunacy inspectors, the health statistics and the poor-law figures show but too plainly. The ratio of the insane per 10,000 of the population in England and Wales is 40.8, in Scotland 45.4, and in Ireland 56.2. Nearly 12,000 people die every year in Ireland from tuberculous disease—a rate per thousand almost double the figure for England and Wales; and one Irishman out of every forty-four is in receipt of rate aid. Moreover, the number of men and women over sixty-five years of age reaches the disastrous proportion of one in every eight of the population. Ireland is becoming a land of the aged and infirm, and of them alone. Her birth-rate is among the lowest in the world, a decimal point, and no more, higher than that of France; the Ireland of early and prolific marriages is altogether a thing of the past.

A few more words have still to be added to round off my present purpose of conveying a rough impression of the general conditions of the people. Ireland is, undoubtedly, a poor country, though the last quarter of a century has seen a slow but steady material progress. The average per capita income of the population has been estimated at \$75, and in the barren and desolate West it is probably considerably lower. The average wages of agricultural laborers, of whom there are in Ireland some 150,000, works out at \$2.75 a week. In the towns there are 79,000 tenements of one room occupied by over 230,000 people. In the country there are more than 10,000 cabins with only one window. Life in these hovels touches, perhaps, as low a state of civilization as is to be found anywhere in Europe outside of Sicily. Of the hundreds that a traveller comes across, those which I saw in County Mayo may be taken as typical—a cluster of eight or nine cabins, wretchedly thatched, built of unhewn stone badly cemented, standing some fifty yards from the roadway in a scene of the bleakest desolation. The soil all about is hostile, meagre, and studded with gray rock and stone. The nearest village is five miles away. To reach the huts you walk

up an unmade road that is half a ditch and half resembles a stone staircase after an earthquake, foul and reeking with mire and effluvia. By the side of the cabin doors are the inevitable manure heap and the winter stack of peat. As you pass into the doorway a flutter of fowls rushes out. The darkness is such that, except when silhouetted against the blazing hearth, you cannot at first make out who or what is there. Gradually three or four barefooted children reveal themselves, and an old man sitting motionless by the fire. Opposite the hearth, in a stall on fairly clean straw, is the family cow. The furniture, standing unevenly on the bare and sodden ground, is of the roughest. There is a tiny inner room where the father and mother sleep, the children herding together in the living-room. Two of them are coughing ominously; all have indigestion; their eyes are reddened with the peat smoke; and their teeth are abominable. How, one asks, do people in such conditions live? They rent, or owe rent for, a patch of ground, growing on it oats and potatoes year after year, until the soil is worn out and the crops blighted. Some rough commonage grazing and the right of cutting a certain amount of turf for fuel go with their holding. But it is not upon the farm they rely to make both ends meet. They may earn a little, but not enough, by the sale of a calf or pig or a few chickens; their main sources of income are harvesting in Ulster, Scotland and England, fishing, if they live on the coast, the weaving of homespun or some other cottage industry, and contributions from their relatives in America. But, above all, they contrive to exist by cutting down their standard of living to the lowest possible point. Milk, potatoes, tea, oatmeal for porridge, some American flour and, as an occasional luxury, a slice or two of the worst American bacon form, with a little whiskey, their staple diet. There are 200,000 holdings in Ireland where the conditions I have roughly glanced at obtain. They are not, of course, to be taken as typical of the whole country; and one must always bear in mind, as a shrewd German observer has put it, that "the power of existing under miserable conditions of life, of eking out an existence and of propagating his species on soil where a Central European goat would die of hunger, has doubtless preserved the Irish people during the long period of scorn and oppression," and has become, one may add, so much an instinct that probably no Irish-

man is really as poor as his appearance, surroundings and mode of life would lead one to infer.

The area of Ireland amounts to a trifle over 20,000,000 acres. Of these over 14,500,000 acres, representing nearly seven-eighths of the total arable land, are meadow or permanent pasture; some 3,250,000 acres are bog, barren mountain, water, woods and plantations; 1,250,000 acres are under corn crops, with oats overwhelmingly in the lead; another million acres are devoted to green crops, chiefly potatoes (590,973 acres) and turnips (275,129 acres), with mangles, flax and cabbages far behind; and slightly under 11,500 acres are planted with fruit. These figures tell their own tale. Taken in conjunction with the fact that, in the last forty-five years, the number of milch cows has positively decreased while that of cattle under a year old has more than doubled, they prove that Ireland is a country not of farmers, but of stock-raisers. The Irish, indeed, have never been an agricultural people, nor are they to-day. They are cattle-breeders and cattle-speculators. Tillage, which nowhere in Ireland is scientifically pursued, has become over large areas virtually a lost art. The national occupation of the people, the one to which their instincts overwhelmingly incline, is the rearing, selling, grazing and export of cattle. It is at once their business and their form of speculation. What the bucket-shop is in America and football and horse-racing in England, that is cattle in Ireland. The dowries of the peasant girls in the West are frequently reckoned in heads of stock; servants invest their savings in cattle, much as in Norway they invest them in boats. Ireland, indeed, from the agricultural point of view, is little more than a ranch for the rearing of cattle, more than half of which are "finished" in England for the English market; and even her success in that line of industry depends very largely on the exclusion of Canadian and Argentine stock from the British ports. On the list of Irish exports of farm produce, of raw materials and of manufactured goods, live stock comes easily first; and among live stock it is the store cattle—cattle, that is, bought up young and unfinished by English dealers, taken over to England, and there grazed till they are ready for market—which, both in numbers and value, form the leading item. In round figures the exports of Irish live stock amount to \$65,000,000 a year. Of this sum \$25,000,000 is represented by store

cattle, about \$17,000,000 by fat cattle, \$6,000,000 by sheep and lambs, \$6,000,000 by pigs, and \$7,000,000 by horses. And this immense and fundamentally unwholesome predominance of pasture over tillage, of cattle-rearing over farming, has some economic results of the most disastrous significance. It means, roughly speaking, that throughout Ireland the best land is given up to bullocks and the worst to men; that the richest soil is unpeopled and uncultivated, while from the poorest a population without capital or technical knowledge, or any sound agricultural instinct, strives with unremitting inefficiency to wring the bare means of livelihood; and it helps to explain why the Irish, when they emigrate, turn their backs on the country and settle overwhelmingly in the towns.

In Ireland itself there are very few towns of any consequence. Belfast, with a population of 350,000, Dublin with 370,000, Cork with 100,000, Limerick with 50,000, Londonderry with 40,000 and Waterford with 26,000 head the list; and there are four or five others with just over 10,000 inhabitants apiece. Altogether about a third of the total population of the country lives in the towns, which in Ireland as elsewhere, though by no means so rapidly, tend to grow at the expense of the rural districts. Except in the hard-headed and industrial North, they do not impress the visitor with the sense of energy and prosperity. Dublin is in many ways a pleasing, even a captivating, city. It has that air and presence which no city which has once been a capital ever quite shakes off. As the seat of administration, the headquarters of justice, the centre of education, of art and letters, the old metropolis still attracts to itself the brightest intellects of the country and propagates a social atmosphere uniquely its own. But, even so, the life of the city is far from being the brilliant affair it was, and its slow economic decline has been even more pronounced. The time seems well in sight when a pint bottle of stout, bearing the name of Guinness, will be the sole as well as the foremost emblem of Dublin manufactures. Some air of a battle lost seems to brood over the city, and to touch its silent quays and rivers, its college and park, and its appalling slums with a sombre tone of decay. Waterford, though it possesses four good-sized bacon-curing establishments, is mainly occupied with the export of cattle and agricultural produce. Cork, an island and relaxing city, fringed with high-perched

suburbs, boasting four miles of quays, is also chiefly concerned in the export of butter, cheese and eggs to Bristol and the Welsh ports. But she has indigenous industries of her own—breweries and distilleries, ship-yards, tanneries, flour-mills, chemical-manure works and textile factories; and, more than any other city in the South, she has labored for the promotion of native industries. Limerick is the home of three of the largest bacon-curing firms in the country, and does, besides, a considerable trade in milling, butter-making and lace; but its prosperity is nothing like what it should be, and its noble position on the estuary of the Shannon, its nearness to the United States, and its equipment of quays, wharfage, graving and floating docks are advantages that have yet to be turned to the best account. It is not until one reaches Londonderry and Belfast that one feels oneself in contact with the atmosphere and problems of a modern industrial city. Londonderry, with its large coasting trade, its shirt-making industry, its fisheries, ship-yards, iron and brass foundries, flour-mills, breweries and distilleries, gives out an instant impression of confidence, energy and success; and the industrial record of Belfast, the Chicago of Ireland, constitutes one of the greatest and most inspiring achievements in the history of commerce. These two towns, in tone and spirit, in their social structure, their instinctive ways of looking at things, and their economic formation, stand in a category of their own and have little or no affinity with Limerick, Cork, Waterford or Dublin; while the gap that separates them from the smaller urban centres, that except in Ireland would not for a moment aspire to the name of towns, is the gap of the entire industrial revolution. I know nothing more disheartening than the life and appearance of the average Irish townlet of three or five thousand people. A surplusage of churches and drinking dens; no industries, no sports; littered, unkempt streets lined with evil-smelling cottages; no diversions except the assizes and an occasional fair, and the rare visit of a tenth-rate theatrical company; a few Protestant families of position forming a tiny, exclusive, and thoroughly bored clique of their own, and around them the Catholic masses whetting their minds on the eternal game of faction—such are the common features of Irish existence in the minor urban centres.

The point I wish to develop and emphasize is that Ireland



suffers from a lopsided national growth. Her industrial have failed to keep pace with her agricultural interests, and the interdependence of the two in the formation of a healthy national life is only just beginning to be recognized. There are many causes, natural and historical, to account for this. Ireland is poor in minerals, in coal especially. Her rivers, unlike the rivers of Italy, do not readily lend themselves to being harnessed. Her internal transit system is neither cheap, rapid, nor co-ordinated; and she lies within a few hours' steaming of one of the most highly industrialized nations in the world. Moreover, in the dark days of Protection, England deliberately strangled her nascent manufactures. Woollens, glass, cotton, sail-cloth, sugar-refining, shipping, all went—crushed out by legislation. Ireland has never recovered from that succession of staggering blows. They killed not merely her industries, but something far more valuable; they killed, or at least fatally impaired, the industrial instinct, and the character, the aptitudes and the kind of self-discipline and self-confidence that are essential to industrial progress. Over two-thirds of Ireland it is not too much to say that the problem of creating new industries or reviving old ones is a moral, even more than it is a technical or an economic, problem. Efforts that are little less than heroic are being put forth in an endeavor to grapple with it; and these, or some of them, I shall hope to pass in review later on. Meanwhile it is of the utmost importance to grasp the determinating facts of Ireland's economic condition. They are, briefly, that her greatest industry, agriculture, has taken the speculative form of stock-raising; so that, as has been intimated, the best land is thus monopolized by cattle and the inferior land alone left over for men; that except in the North, and on a meagre and more or less tentative scale in a few scattered ports, manufactures scarcely exist; that for those defeated in the battle for an agricultural livelihood there are left, in consequence, hardly any openings in the towns; and that the economic movement, which in happier and better-balanced countries takes the form of migration from the rural districts to the urban centres, thus assumes in Ireland the disastrous shape of emigration. Two vital problems emerge from these conditions. One is the problem of devising a system of farming that will keep as many men as possible on the soil in a position of comfort and of economic independence.

The other is the correlated problem of checking emigration by the encouragement of minor industries.

There is nothing more vital to the well-being of a nation than its educational system. Ireland has no educational system; it has merely an educational chaos. The defects of the primary schools may be seen on the very surface of the statistics. With about the same population as Scotland, Ireland has about twice as many schools and over 3,500 more head teachers. The inference that she is therefore twice as well educated is not, however, a sound one. The Irish percentage of illiteracy is twelve times as high as the Scottish figure. The explanation of these anomalies is very simple. The fierce and historic conflict of sects in Ireland has stimulated each denomination to provide its own schools. Thus, in a village just capable of supporting one good school you will find two, three and sometimes four. The Church of England will have one, the Presbyterians another, and the Catholics will require two—one for the boys and one for the girls. In this way a total of nearly nine thousand schools is easily reached. Over five thousand of them are attended by pupils of one sect only, and in the remainder one faith or the other is usually in a great majority, a "conscience clause" protecting the religious susceptibilities of the minority. The results are that the Irish primary schools, being far in excess of the requirements of the population, are among the worst built and the worst equipped; their management is wholly in the hands of the clergy; their teachers are miserably paid; the children play truant two days out of every five; and each successive generation is insensibly familiarized with the idea that sectarian exclusiveness is one of the natural conditions of civilized life. Redundant schools, starved and ill-taught teachers, clericalism in unchallenged control, an almost total lack of local interest, a curriculum wholly divorced from the economic needs and realities of the country, and, to crown all, a National Board of educational amateurs, nominated by Dublin Castle, insensible to Irish ideas and representations, deliberating in secret and decreeing without either consultation or explanation—such are the outstanding features of the Irish "system" of elementary education. Nor are the secondary schools in much better plight. There are in Ireland very few of those noble endowments which are the glory of England and America. The connection between

the primary and the intermediate schools is ludicrously imperfect, the latter being managed by an independent Board of their own, whose chief contribution to Irish education is a costly extension of the pernicious system of payment by results. With technical instruction only a beginning has been made; and all that I need at present say of the state of higher education is that there is only one University with any pretensions to be judged by the standards of modern scholarship, and that that one is a rallying-point for Protestantism and is, therefore, shunned by the Catholics, who form three-quarters of the population.

I am reminded by what I have just written that the fact which dwarfs all other facts about Ireland is that she is Catholic. She is far more Catholic than is implied in the bare statement that three-fourths of her people belong to the ancient communion. She is Catholic with an intensity unequalled—unapproached, indeed—by any other English-speaking people and unsurpassed by any people anywhere. An inquirer into Irish affairs will find in this phenomenon the most delicate and baffling of all the problems that beset him. He observes at once that in Ireland the priesthood has attained to a predominance in the secular sphere of every-day life such as is scarcely rivalled even in Spain or lower Quebec. He will endeavor, therefore, to discover how this power is used and to what extent the priests, by their training and their ideals, are fitted to wield it. He will seek to assess the influence of Catholicism upon the national character, and even to determine what type of Catholicism it is that flourishes in Ireland—whether it is the American type or the French or more nearly approaches that which obtains in Mexico. Recognizing that among a profoundly religious people no power can be greater than that of religion, he will inevitably ask from the Church a full account of her stewardship. It will be his business to ascertain, if possible, in what way she fulfils her mission of instructing and elevating the people; what part, if any, she plays in their political affairs; how far her teachings or her policy equip them with the character that is essential to material success; what effect the establishment she maintains produces upon the economic vitality of the masses, and the degree in which she encourages temperance, clear-thinking, virility, joyousness. These are questions that I propose to examine in some detail later on.

Meanwhile it will be more convenient to round off this superficial picture of Ireland's condition by noting some of the more obvious results of her connection with Great Britain. One of these results is that Ireland, though a poor country, is obliged to maintain one of the most expensive governments in the world. She is administered by an amazing medley of overmanned, overlapping Boards, with their headquarters in Dublin Castle. It is a system that has most of the vices of a bureaucracy and very little even of its mechanical efficiency. A Russian bureaucracy in Finland could not be more utterly divorced from the sympathies and confidence of the people it rules. The stronghold of a small minority, of a single class, almost of a single creed, overrun with placemen impenetrable to Irish ideas and Irish needs, uncontrolled by Parliament in London or by any representative body in Ireland, and presided over by a Viceroy who maintains that most demoralizing and contemptible of all social institutions, a sham Court,—I scarcely know what merit it possesses or what faults it lacks. With a slightly smaller population than Scotland, Ireland is saddled with nearly three times as many officials, a police force twice as large and costing \$5,000,000 a year more for its upkeep, and a judiciary three times as expensive in proportion to population as the judiciary of England and Wales. An example is thus set of jobbery and extravagance that permeates the whole conduct of government in Ireland. Another result of the legislative union with Great Britain is that Ireland is grievously overtaxed. It is not that taxes are imposed upon her which are remitted in England, Scotland or Wales. The exact contrary is the case, certain taxes, mainly of an insignificant character, which are collected from the other parts of the United Kingdom, being remitted in favor of Ireland. Irish overtaxation is due to the fact that the capacity of the people to bear taxation is below that of the English, the Welsh or the Scotch, and that identical imposts fall upon her shoulders in consequence with a disproportionate weight. She contributes about one-eleventh of the British revenue, whereas her taxable capacity is not estimated to exceed one-twentieth; and the burden falls all the more heavily on her poor, inasmuch as over seventy per cent. of the amount extracted from her is derived from indirect taxes.

We have, then, in Ireland a poor and dwindling people, mainly

Catholic, with a low standard of living that is emphasized and perpetuated by their absorption in stock-raising, their ignorance of agriculture, and the backwardness of their industrial development. They are a keen-witted people, but wretchedly educated. They are governed by a nation that is and must always be temperamentally incapable of understanding them—a nation that has made in Ireland its one grand administrative failure. The English are Protestant, stupid and successful; the Irish are Catholic, imaginative, intelligent,—and failures. Against this ill-assorted and unproductive union the Irish have never ceased to rebel. It is not that they suffer from actual oppression of the kind that the Germans inflict upon the Poles or the Russians upon the Finns. The exceptional laws, safeguards and precautions that are applied to Ireland and are not applied to England are few in number, and on the whole of little account. The Irish grievances against England are preponderantly sentimental and not material. Administrative extravagance and over-taxation, and the perpetual sacrifice of Irish interests to the exigencies of English parties, are evils that cut less deeply into the popular consciousness than the lack of sympathy between rulers and ruled. The British spirit is repugnant to five-sixths of the Irish people, and the Irish spirit incomprehensible to almost all Englishmen; and the gulf that separates them never seems so impassable as when England is most bent upon doing Ireland justice. Seven centuries of turbulent history have, unquestionably, weakened the moral fibre, impaired the virility, and encouraged every instinct of dissimulation among the Irishry; but they have not robbed the Irishry of an abiding consciousness of nationality or of the conviction that they, and not their English rulers, are the rightful possessors of the soil of Ireland. The fight for the land and the fight for Home Rule still mark the goal of Irish endeavors.

SYDNEY BROOKS.

*(To be Continued.)*